

Mono County Collaborative Planning Team

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CPT MINUTES

January 29, 2004
(Adopted March 4, 2004)

Members Present: Chair John Cecil, Mono Supervisors; Katy Walton, Caltrans; Denyse Racine, DFG; Kathy Lucich, USFS/Humboldt-Toiyabe; Bill Dunkelberger, BLM; Beverly Cheeseboro, DWP alternate; JoEllen Keil, USFS/Inyo

Members Absent: Jeff Bailey, USFS/Inyo; John Eastman, Mammoth Lakes Town Council; Joseph Saulque, Benton Paiute Reservation; Chris Plakos, LADWP; Cindi Mitton, Lahontan RWQCB; Art Sam, Bridgeport Indian Colony

Staff Present: Scott Burns, C.D. Ritter

Guests Present: Lisa Cutting, Mono Lake Committee; Mary Canada, Sierra Business Council; Ericka Spies, MCWD; Darin Dinsmore, Opticos Design; George Shirk, Mammoth Monthly magazine; Steve Smith, BLM/Ridgecrest; Wilma Wheeler, Sierra Club

1. CALL TO ORDER & FLAG SALUTE: Incoming chair John Cecil called the meeting to order at 9:17 a.m. and led the flag salute.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

3. "THE DOLLARS AND SENSE OF PROTECTING COMMUNITY CHARACTER": Ed McMahon video

Mary Canada of Sierra Business Council noted that the SBC's recent Sierra Leadership Seminar involved four ad hoc teams from Mammoth Lakes and a team from Inyo County. The Ed McMahon video provided inspiration for Lone Pine/Independence to move toward economic revitalization. Shown below are excerpts from McMahon's presentation:

A healthy environment depends on a vibrant community and vigorous economy. Development projects can be profitable *and* protect the environment. Wealth, not poverty, allows us to do things. "Everything is connected to everything else." – Aldo Leopold.

The special character of small towns has been disappearing. "If you don't know where you are, you don't know who you are." – Wallace Stegner. There is a fundamental need for orientation, roots and a sense of place. We're losing our sense of place – that which makes our physical surroundings worth caring about. People have no sense of assurance that everything won't be developed.

People want a greater connection with the out of doors, yet our environment is diminished daily by noise, pollution and blight. Growth is both inevitable and desirable, but destruction of community character is *not* inevitable. Progress does not demand that we degrade our surroundings. The problem is not development itself, but the patterns of development: 1) where it is; 2) how it's arranged; and 3) what it looks like. It also means figuring out where not to develop. Some places are better than others (not on flood plains, not on steep slopes). More choices exist than creating a national park with no residents versus anything-goes, insensitive development. Growth/development can respect and enhance a community's character. But more pavement means less affordable housing and less safety, more soil erosion and greater pollution. "Smart growth" involves development that's good for the environment, good for business and good for the community. It has greater economic value.

The gateway to a community is its front door, its image. A favorable first impression is important. People make decisions on where to live, where to invest, where to vacation and where to retire based on how a community looks, its sense of place and sense of pride. The very basis of tourism is looking for places that are different, unusual and unique. Image cost effectiveness: Image is fundamental to economic well-being. There is dollar value on a view. People pay to see a view and experience the unique character of a place. The better the view, the higher the price it commands. Preserving open land has fiscal value. Golf courses were the first open-space developments. Only 40% of buyers actually play golf, while 60% are attracted to the open space. Since golf courses cost millions of dollars to build, why not just leave the open space alone?

For 300 years in this country the model for development was the town. After World War II, people decided to move goods and services around, making it necessary to drive everywhere for everything. Main Street, an idea abandoned about 50 years ago, is the single hottest retail concept today. People gravitate toward town centers, as the downtown is the heart and soul of any community. Main Street sells.

Studies show the top three priorities that people want from development: 1) low traffic, 2) natural open space, and 3) bike/walking trails. Golf courses rank #30.

Land development is not a numbers game, but how buildings are arranged on the land. Preserving that which physically links us to the past tells who we are, where we came from. Preservation is good for the economic bottom line. An example is San Antonio, Texas, where town officials had been talking of under-grounding the river. Instead, they recognized it as the single defining characteristic of their town and created the San Antonio River Walk, now the most-visited place in Texas.

Historic buildings have economic value. People will save what they love. What are we building today that will be worth preserving in the future? According to Winston Churchill, "We shape our buildings, and then our buildings shape us." Building architecture should reflect the area, not corporate cookie-cutter architecture. Any building can fit in with the character of a community and complement the quality of the landscape. Not all franchise buildings need to look alike. Hotel chains should reflect the city, not each other (look-alikes). Places differ in history, climate, culture and terrain. Buildings in different areas are *supposed* to look different, not like "Anyplace USA."

Development should have voluntary compliance, but mandatory review (guidelines). Successful communities consider what they look like. Community character deteriorates one building at a time. But it can get better the same way – one building at a time – through education and interpretation.

Communities can tell stories in landscape. Public art adds fun, whimsy and interest. It defines a neighborhood, tells a story. Outdoor signs give needed information, but too often are oversized, poorly planned, badly located and too numerous. Instead of ugly, expensive signs that don't work, why not tell people why views, resources and water quality are important. Signs project the image of a community faster than anything else. Does a community want to look classy or trashy, beautiful or ugly, quaint or tacky, special or ordinary? Image is fundamentally important to the economic well-being of a community. With the copy-cat logic of competition (e.g., taller and taller signs), commercial clutter prevents people from finding what they're looking for. A Vermont publication boasts, "Vermont has no billboards. Here's why:" – for the health of its tourism.

A community should inventory its assets and plan around enhancement of those assets. The most important question is, "What should we do?" The second most important is cost. Money always follows good ideas. Communities should pick and choose among development proposals, and consider aesthetics as well as economics. The visioning process in a community involves education, tax incentives and partnerships. The fastest-growing part of the conservation movement in America is the land trust.

The power of "no" in a small town is very powerful. There are only two kinds of change – planned and unplanned. Failing to plan simply means planning to fail.

The power of place has rich symbolic importance. It is fragile, beautiful and resource rich. There is a sense of loss when a grove of trees is cut down or a building is destroyed. It's like losing a loved one or a friend. "The destruction of things familiar and important causes great anxiety in people." – Margaret Mead. Cultural continuity and beauty are desirable. Preserving memory provides comfort, stability and security. Buildings, places and views contribute to a sense of identity and well-being. Attempting to keep a mental grip on familiar and accustomed places makes us comfortable and secure. Cities should preserve visible symbols of identity to give citizens a sense of security in a changing world. Communities can grow without destroying things people love.

4. MONO BASIN BIRD CHAUTAUQUA 2003:

Lisa Cutting, Mono Lake Committee's Eastern Sierra policy director, presented photos of birders visiting diverse sites at the event, which attracted 300 birders. The event is probably self-limiting in size, she said, as it already utilizes the limited venue space in Lee Vining. Chautauqua partners are the Mono Lake Committee, USFS/Inyo National Forest, Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve, Eastern Sierra Audubon, and the Pt. Reyes Bird Observatory.

Great diversity is experienced without distance travel: wetlands, shoreline, riparian, canyons and high-elevation meadows. Groups are kept small (10-12) to assure a quality experience that also includes wildflowers, butterflies and geology walks. There are strong research and community components to the event – kids are exposed to research and science, and the event generates return visitors in shoulder seasons.

Cutting noted that birding is the fastest-growing recreational activity in the nation. People plan trips off maps such as the Eastern Sierra Birding Trail Map, which was distributed at the meeting. This map, now available at chambers of commerce and visitor centers in Inyo and Mono counties, can tag onto events and shape visitor use near local communities. Southeastern Arizona's map was the prototype for the local map. Texas is now producing its fourth map.

Phase II of the birding map will focus on generating funds for reprints, becoming self-sustaining, and making connections between businesses and visitors. Bird-friendly businesses that contribute a \$50/year fee will receive a decal to attract birders. Birding is a win/win situation for economic sustainability and habitat preservation.

The 2004 event is scheduled June 18-20, near the summer solstice for maximum daylight.

5. **AGENCY ROUNDTABLE:** Members outlined agency planning issues and upcoming projects.
6. **MINUTES:** Approve minutes of Dec. 4, 2003: (Dunkelberger/Lucich. Ayes: Unanimous.)
7. **ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR:**
MOTION: Propose nomination of John Eastman, subject to his agreement, and take action next meeting. (Walton/Dunkelberger. Ayes: Unanimous)
8. **CPT MEETING SCHEDULE CHANGES:** Suggestions to discuss at next meeting: 1) change meeting dates to first Thursday; 2) end meeting at noon? 12:30 p.m.? 1 p.m.?.; or 3) change to all-day meetings, with lunch break, every other month.
9. **SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:** *Continued to next meeting.*
10. **SET NEXT MEETING:** The next meeting will be held Thursday, March 4, 2004, at 9 a.m.
FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS
 - A. Preserving Mono Basin's History: The Conway Ranch Project (BLM/Halford)
 - B. CURES update (Irons)
 - C. Sierra Nevada Framework Record of Decision/Supplemental EIS
 - D. Fuel breaks (USFS)
 - E. CPT Year in Review 2003
 - F. Eastern Sierra Expanded Transit System (USFS/Hogan)
11. **ADJOURN:** 1 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, C.D. Ritter, team secretary